

**'Everyone's got an opinion'**

**By Sam Farr, Member of Congress**

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Public polls are funny things, not least because they often don't represent how the public really feels. It's all too easy for pollsters to come up with whatever answers they desire, which is how many of them force "public opinion" into tidy packages that advance their own agenda.

This, in turn, feeds into a perceived "mood on the street," providing endless fodder for opinion writers and talk show hosts. And as we have seen more and more in recent years, conservative writers and radio hosts use these fabricated "opinions" to push their pet issues.

That's the long way of saying that I don't believe Americans are as down on Congress as these talking heads suggest. Furthermore, I think if those talking heads did a better job informing people about what's really happening in Washington, they would be amazed.

Let me run down just a few of the things Democrats in Congress have done since January:

- Voted in favor of the 9/11 Commission recommendations, ignored by the GOP leadership;
- Pushed through the first national minimum wage increase in 10 years;
- Advanced alternative energy initiatives to combat climate change;
- Installed pay-as-you-go budget rules to rein in spending;
- Provided disaster aid to the Gulf Coast and our nation's farmers and ranchers;
- Voted to expand college aid and increase health coverage for 6 million children;
- Established new rules to hold Congress to the highest ethical standards;
- The House has also passed the largest increase for veterans' health care in history, a Farm Bill that finally addresses California's needs, and all 12 appropriations bills.

In contrast, take a peek at the list of Bush administration accomplishments during the same six

months:

- Protected Alberto Gonzales, the bumbling attorney general;
- Vetoed a stem cell bill aimed at medical research;
- Vetoed legislation demanding a timetable for soldiers to leave Iraq;
- Instead, increased troop levels in Iraq;
- Threatened to veto 27 bills that would make essential investments in America, investments that have been ignored to fund the war in Iraq

More than 75 measures have passed through the floor of House of Representatives. Even more heartening, nearly three quarters of those bills passed with significant bipartisan support. In some cases, Republicans in Congress have even threatened to overturn a Bush veto.

So I challenge all of you: the next time you come across a story that seeks to tell you what your own "opinion" is, skip it and head to the nearest substantive coverage of what's really going on in Washington. You may just be surprised.